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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Pointers on Jelly Making

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A dialogue between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Kenneth Gapen, Radio Service, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio station, Thursday, June 11, 1936.

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MR. GAPEN: Well, Miss Van Deman, are you rested up after all your labors with the Country Women of the World?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Oh yes, and feeling very proud and happy to have had even a small part in one of the most interesting conferences that's ever been held in Washington. And one of the best things about it was meeting personally so many of our Farm and Home Hour friends from Ohio, and Kansas, and Nebraska, and Texas, and all over.

MR. GAPEN: Too bad you and Morse Salisbury couldn't have given a party, maybe a strawberry shortcake party. But, Miss Van Deman, what's the topic for today?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Well, I have a few notes here with me about jelly making. Currants and raspberries and blackberries are getting ripe in lots of places. And we're getting the usual flood of questions about jellies -- why they fail to jell, and what makes them too stiff, and so forth. It's not very easy to diagnose jelly troubles at long distance. So the best I can do is to give you some of the pointers on making perfect jelly that Mrs. Yeatman and the others down in our laboratories have discovered in the course of their experiments.

Currants of course are one of the A No. 1 jelly-making fruits. They have color, and flavor, and plenty of acid. And they are very rich in pectin, that substance that some fruits have and others lack, but that's absolutely necessary to make a fruit juice jell. As you know, you can extract this pectin from apples or from citrus fruit peel, or you can buy one of the commercial pectin extracts and make jelly from any kind of fruit juice. But to produce those beautiful, clear, sparkling, quivering, tender qualities we associate with perfect jelly, there has to be just the right amount of acid and sugar to pectin.

Here are Mrs. Yeatman's directions verbatim for making currant jelly:

"I use high quality fruit, if I can get it, as fresh as possible and ripe, but not over ripe. I succeed better if I cook up only about 6 quarts, or 6 pounds, of fruit for jelly at a time. By making two extractions of juice from the 6 pounds of currants I get 18 or 20 glasses of excellent jelly.

"After I've washed the currants thoroughly, I put them, stems and all, into a large kettle, crush them a little to start the juice flowing, and heat quickly to boiling. I add no water to currants, but I stir them almost constantly to prevent sticking. I boil the currants rapidly for about 10 minutes, or until the skins turn white, then I pour the cooked fruit into a jelly bag to drain.

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If you want clear jelly, for the bag use cotton flannel, with the fuzzy side in, or several thicknesses of cheese cloth. And don't squeeze the bag; let the juice drip out as it will." (Mrs. Yeatman was very emphatic on that point, don't squeeze the jelly bag, just let the juice drip out.)

Now, quoting her again. " For the second extraction, after an hour or so, when the drops are very few and far between, turn the currant pulp back into the kettle. This time add just enough water to cover the pulp, cook it just as at first, and turn it into the jelly bag to drain again. I mix the juice from these two extractions, and make it into jelly 4 to 6 cups at a time. With a strong jelly making juice like currant, I use a cup of sugar to a cup of juice. That is, equal quantities of fruit juice and sugar. With some fruits  $\frac{3}{4}$  as much sugar as juice makes better jelly."

Mrs. Yeatman is always very emphatic about not making more than 6 cups of juice into jelly at a time. And she advises using a broad, flat-bottomed kettle, large enough to allow rapid boiling. Jelly is one of the things you don't simmer; you boil, because you want the excess water to evaporate as quickly as possible.

Now to go on with our currant jelly, stir the juice and sugar until the sugar dissolves, then stop stirring and let the sirup boil rapidly until it gives the jelly test.

As for the test to tell when the sirup is ready to pour into the glasses, Mrs. Yeatman still holds to the old-fashioned sheeting off test. You know, the one where you dip a spoon into the boiling sirup, and watch it run off the side of the spoon as you hold it up in the air. If the sirup separates into two distinct lines of drops that sheet together, then it's cooked enough. Take it from the fire.

Sometimes jelly makers try to cook their jelly by a thermometer to a certain temperature. We've found that different juices vary too much to make this a sure guide, so we don't recommend it.

After you take the hot sirup from the fire, let it stand in the kettle while you lift the clean jelly glasses from boiling water. Then skim off the film, pour carefully into the hot glasses, and cover. In twelve hours or so, the jelly should be firm and ready to seal with melted paraffin. And be sure to store your jelly in a cool, dry place. If you keep jelly in a hot, moist atmosphere, it's likely to ooze out over the paraffin and mold. I asked Mrs. Yeatman about combining currant and red raspberry juice for jelly. Excellent idea, she said. Even a cup of red raspberry to three or four cups of currant juice is enough to give that delicious red raspberry flavor to the jelly.

MR. GAPEN: Miss Van Deman, I'm sorry to call time on you. I see you haven't covered all of your notes, but I guess we'll have to say continued in our next for this story on jelly making. In the meantime, haven't you some of those pamphlets on making jellies and preserves you can send to anybody who wants more information?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, I think we still have a few and we've ordered some more. We've mailed out over 2,000 since that talk on strawberry preserves.

MR. GAPEN: Good. That augurs well for the folks who like hot biscuits and strawberry preserves.